

VZCZCXRO8417
RR RUEHMR
DE RUEHSB #0533/01 1291534
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 091534Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9980
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1200
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1036
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1203
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000533

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING
SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2015
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATORS TAP SCHOOL FEE RESENTMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary

¶1. (U) Police arrested 185 demonstrators who had been protesting school fees at a Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA) demonstration in Bulawayo on May 4; all were released as of May 8. A brief WOZA demonstration in Harare May 8 attracted 80-100 participants. None of the participants were arrested in connection with a 15-minute march that dispersed of its own volition. End Summary.

185 Arrested, Released in Bulawayo March

¶2. (U) Approximately 400 members of the women's activist group Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA) marched in Bulawayo on May 4 demanding the reversal of primary and secondary school fee increases of up to 1,000 percent. The demonstration marked the first instance in which large numbers of men and school-aged children participated alongside WOZA's female marchers. A WOZA press statement noted that many of the children wore their school uniforms, signifying that it may be the last time that they will be able to wear the clothing since they cannot afford to pay for the new school term that begins today.

¶3. (C) Police arrested 185 demonstrators, including 73 children, some as young as seven years old. All of the children were released the evening of May 4 and all eight mothers with young babies present were released by May 6. WOZA reported on May 8 that the remaining detainees were kept in harsh conditions and had been denied access to blankets, despite the early onset of Zimbabwe's winter, leading some to become ill. A WOZA spokeswomen on May 8 told Post that

prosecutors that morning had dropped all charges against the marchers, who were all finally freed later in the day.

Smaller Harare March Uneventful

¶4. (U) On May 8, WOZA members in Harare conducted another demonstration against school fees. Embassy personnel observed an estimated 80-100 marchers, including some men and school-aged children in uniform, as they chanted slogans against the tuition hike and made their way to the offices of Education Minister Anneas Chigwedere. Pamphlets distributed read in part, "mothers demand their children's right to education." The brief demonstration elicited no police response and the marchers quickly dispersed at their destination.

Comment

¶5. (C) With a new school term beginning May 9, parents are now preoccupied with scraping together enough money to pay for the new higher fees. Especially hard hit are primarily lower income families that attend government schools, where tuition hikes of more than 500 percent this term are common. WOZA's demonstrations against school fee hikes are tapping into budding popular resentment. Providing a fitting backdrop to the march in Harare, banks in the business district experienced exceptionally long lines as parents queued at the last minute to pay school fees. It is unclear whether police forbearance against the Harare demonstration

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reflected a lack of clear instruction on the ground or a conscious decision from senior police levels.
DELL